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SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR AF/W (JHUNTER)

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/17/2019

TAGS: PGOV PREL PINR SL GV

SUBJECT: KOROMA MEETS WITH GUINEAN JUNTA DESPITE POLITICAL RISKS/WARNINGS

REF: A. FREETOWN 184

1B. FREETOWN 209

1C. CONAKRY 408

Classified By: Ambassador June Carter Perry for reasons 1.4 (b/d)

11. (U) On July 13, President Koroma held a bilateral discussion with Guinean junta leader Moussa Dadis Camara (reftel C). The Mano River Union Heads of State Summit, scheduled for July 14, was canceled, but Koroma chose to speak with Dadis Camara without other Heads of State present. The likely topic of discussion was the disputed Yenga border area, according to local media reports published July 16.

12. (C) Koroma's meeting with Dadis is not entirely unexpected, per reftel B, but was made against the advice of Ambassador (reftel A). Though the Foreign Minister suggested in both reftel meetings that it was important for the Government of Sierra Leone to engage with the junta to protect their own national security, Ambassador was clear that diplomatic ties with Guinea will not be normal until a democratic election takes place. The FoMin appeared to understand the political and diplomatic risks associated with a meeting with Dadis, but was convinced that Sierra Leonean interests would be best served through engagement with the junta. Ambassador will raise this issue with both the FoMin (on July 20) and the President as soon as possible, to remind them that giving Dadis Camara the appearance of legitimacy undermines international efforts to push for an election and return to civil power.

PERRY